

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 05743 121806Z
ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-14 SP-02 L-01 INR-05 SSO-00
INRE-00 PA-01 PM-03 (ISO) W
-----071119 190247Z /42
O P 121748Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5062
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN PRIORITY
AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 05743

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E. O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, PINT, UK, EI
SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND: CALLAGHAN-LYNCH MEETING

REF: LONDON 4321

SUMMARY: FROM THE BRITISH VIEWPOINT, THE APRIL 7
COPENHAGEN MEETING BETWEEN PRIME MINISTERS CALLAGHAN
AND LYNCH PRODUCED A POSITIVE RESULT. ALTHOUGH MAINLY
A COSMETIC EXERCISE FOR CONSUMPTION IN IRELAND, IT DID
GIVE CALLAGHAN AN OPPORTUNITY TO REAFFIRM HIS SUPPORT
FOR NI SECRETARY MASON'S POLICIES AND CLEARS THE WAY
FOR A SUBSTANTIVE MEETING BETWEEN MASON AND IRISH
FOREIGN MINISTER O' KENNEDY. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S POLITICAL ADVISOR,
WHO ACCOMPANIED CALLAGHAN TO THE APRIL 7-8 EC SUMMIT IN
COPENHAGEN BUT DID NOT SIT IN ON CALLAGHAN'S 35-MINUTE
BILATERAL SESSION WITH IRISH PM LYNCH, THE MEETING WAS
CORDIAL, LARGELY ANODYNE AND OPENED THE WAY FOR A RES-
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TORATION OF ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS. ACCORDING TO OUR
SOURCE, LYNCH SEEMED TO BELIEVE THAT THERE WERE GROWING
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CALLAGHAN AND MASON ON THE NI ISSUE,
AND CALLAGHAN WAS ABLE TO DISPEL THIS NOTION. THUS
FROM THE BRITISH VIEWPOINT THE MEETING WAS USEFUL
BECAUSE IT LAID TO REST THAT MISCONCEPTION; GAVE
CALLAGHAN AN OPPORTUNITY TO REAFFIRM THE BRITISH POSITION

ON NI (THAT HMG HAS NO OBJECTION TO INTEGRATION BUT THAT THE ULTIMATE DECISION MUST REST WITH THE PEOPLE OF NI, AND THAT IT CANNOT IMPOSE A POLITICAL SOLUTION IN NI); AND WILL ALLOW THE IRISH TO AGREE TO A FOLLOW-ON SUBSTANTIVE MEETING BETWEEN MASON AND IRISH FOREIGN MINISTER O'KENNEDY.

2. OUR SOURCE ALSO REPORTED THAT LYNCH PRODUCED A DRAFT PRESS STATEMENT FOR CALLAGHAN'S APPROVAL AT THE END OF THE MEETING WHICH WENT FAR BEYOND WHAT THE BRITISH WERE PREPARED TO ACCEPT (HE DID NOT ELABORATE). CALLAGHAN FIRMLY REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE DRAFT, SUGGESTING INSTEAD THAT THEY MERELY REAFFIRM THEIR JOINT STATEMENT OF SEPTEMBER 1977 AND ANNOUNCE THAT THE TWO GOVERNMENTS WOULD BE SETTING A DATE FOR THE MASON/O'KENNEDY MEETING TO DISCUSS SECURITY, CROSS-BORDER ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND OTHER MATTERS. LYNCH AGREED.

3. HMG, ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE, BELIEVES THE RECENT DETERIORATION IN ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS WAS THE PRODUCT OF SEVERAL FACTORS: FIANNA FAIL'S ROMANTIC COMMITMENT TO A UNIFIED IRELAND; ITS FRUSTRATION OVER THE EVIDENT STALEMATE ON THE NI POLITICAL FRONT; IRISH INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS TO COMPREHEND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF UNIONIST ATTITUDES; THE PERCEPTION THAT MASON WAS GIVING WAY TO UNIONIST PRESSURES; AND THE MISTAKEN NOTION

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THAT THERE WERE GROWING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CALLAGHAN AND MASON ON NI. AS A RESULT, LYNCH STAKED OUT A POSITION THAT WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE BRITISH, AND RATHER THAN RETREAT, RESORTED TO THE TIME-HONORED IRISH TACTIC OF "BASHING THE BRITS". HMG IS NOW HOPEFUL LYNCH WILL MOVE AWAY FROM WHAT WAS AN UNTENABLE PUBLIC POSITION AND RESTORE ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS TO A MORE NORMAL FOOTING. THE BRITISH, HOWEVER, DO NOT EXPECT RELATIONS WITH THE LYNCH GOVERNMENT TO EVER BE AS CLOSE AND CORDIAL AS THOSE WITH THE PREVIOUS COSGRAVE ADMINISTRATION.

4. WE WILL REPORT SEPARATELY ON THE OFFICIAL FCO ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETINGS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LONDON05743
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780166-0966
Format: TEL
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780463/aaaacbmjg.tel
Line Count: 111
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 17063ab1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS, STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS, STADIS
Reference: 78 LONDON 4321
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2987798
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NORTHERN IRELAND: CALLAGHAN-LYNCH MEETING
TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, PINT, UK, EI, (CALLAGHAN, JAMES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/17063ab1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014